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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 3, 1972

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The Honorable
Richard Helms
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Mr. Helms:

On September 18 I wrote you that I would appreciate it if you could arrange to have a Central Intelligence Agency report, which Mr. Tad Szulc of the New York Times reported had been made available to him, also made available to me. You replied on September 22 that after a thorough review of your files you were unable to identify any Agency report which fit the description given by Mr. Szulc.

I would assume that there are reports, studies, analyses, notes, memoranda or documents characterized in some other way prepared in August by your Agency which assessed the effects of the bombing on North Vietnamese military capabilities. I gather from your letter that you do not know which intelligence officials made available which particular document to Mr. Szulc. Since you are not able to identify any particular Agency document, I would appreciate it if you could arrange to make available to me whatever documents were prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency on this subject in August.

Sincerely yours,


J. W. Fulbright
Chairman

FIGHTING POWER OF POW EVALUATED

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The reports was made available to The New York Times today by highly placed intelligence officials.

These officials, citing daily intelligence estimates as well as the bombing reports, said that all the indications were that the Communists were preparing new "high-point" offensives throughout South Vietnam within 30 days.

Following are the highlights of the current intelligence estimates and findings made available by the intelligence officials:

Some 20,000 fresh North Vietnamese troops have infiltrated into South Vietnam in the last six weeks, making an approximate total of 100,000 regular soldiers there. Only one training brigade is said to remain in North Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese now have the highest number of regular troops in the Mekong River delta, southwest of Saigon, since the start of the war. The total was estimated at 20,000 to 30,000 men compared with 3,000 a year ago. Most of the infiltration has occurred since the start of the Communist offensive March 30—and intelligence officials said that the delta now was "our biggest problem," as pacification programs had become seriously threatened.

A third petroleum pipeline has been completed between the Chinese frontier railroad terminal of Pingxiang and Hanoi. The work began in May,

after the United States bombed Hanoi and Haiphong harbor, but the completion of the third pipeline is known only in recent days.

The North Vietnamese have built additional pipelines southward from Hanoi to supply their forces in South Vietnam. One of them reaches down to the Ashau Valley.

Intelligence officials, discussing the reports of the two agencies, said that it was virtually impossible for air strikes to cut the pipelines, which are four inches in diameter. Two officials said that whenever a pipeline was hit, North Vietnamese technicians turned it off at pumping stations while rapid repairs were made.

As for railways from China, they said, the North Vietnamese have to a large extent neutralized the effects of the bombing by marshaling all available rolling stock and manpower.

The officials said that the

North Vietnamese "ant tactics" involved moving supplies by rail up to a bombed-out bridge or a severed highway. The supplies are then reportedly moved by river barges, truck, bicycle or back pack to railroad cars waiting beyond a damaged section of the track or a destroyed bridge, and reloaded. At the same time, it was noted, labor units repair the tracks and bridges.

Officials' Conclusions

Intelligence officials said, was that the "back" used in the movement of troops and the strike on the North Vietnamese to their forces fighting.

They said that frequent pillars of "secondary explosions" along the infiltration trails and the capture of arms and munitions caches—a 143-ton cache was reported found by South Vietnamese troops last week—suggested that material continued moving southward.

The "secondary explosions" are said to indicate that munitions depots or loaded trucks have been hit while other targets have been under attack.

The officials said the predictions of new enemy offensives during September and October were based on the deployment of troops southward, the "preparation of battlefields" by demolition and other new technical units, captured documents and information from defectors and prisoners of war.

These officials emphasized

what they termed "a major effort" by the Communists to bring troops and supplies into the Mekong Delta through Cambodia's Chup plantation area, the so-called Parrot's beak area of Cambodia, which juts into South Vietnam west of Saigon, and Route 1, the main highway from Saigon to Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

United States intelligence estimates are that since the start of the Communist offensive at the end of March in the northern part of South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong have lost 100,000 dead on the battlefield and in bombing attacks. The South Vietnamese toll is put at 25,000 to 30,000.

But intelligence officials emphasized that both sides had suffered equally in the losses in officers and non-commissioned officers.

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